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SUBJECT: COMMUNISTS AND ISLAMISTS MAKE FOR STRANGE
BEDFELLOWS

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Aubrey Carlson. Reasons 1.
4 (B/D).

¶1. (C//REL ACGU) Summary: Some Chinese academic and third-country diplomatic contacts believe the recent memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and major Pakistani Islamist political party Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) strengthens the Chinese position in Xinjiang Province. In contrast, one academic viewed the agreement as simply a gesture of "respect" to the Islamic community in Pakistan. A Pakistan Embassy contact said JI's strong organization made it a more attractive interlocutor to the CCP than other Islamist political parties. End Summary.

¶2. (C//REL ACGU) Commenting on February 17 media reports of a memorandum of understanding between the CCP and the Pakistani Islamist party JI, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) scholar Ye Hailin suggested to PolOff that, because radicalized religious groups were suspicious of Chinese interests in Pakistan and supported Xinjiang separatists, China wanted to deal directly with JI, which had a strong influence on these groups. The "maliks can help us very much," he said.

¶3. (C//REL ACGU) Afghan Embassy First Secretary Mirwais Nab separately concurred, telling PolOff on February 26 that the CCP's agreement with JI both "legitimized Chinese sovereignty over Xinjiang" and demonstrated that the Chinese no longer believed they could rely on the Pakistan government (i.e., the Pakistan People's Party) alone to look after its interests. Nab said that his Farsi-speaking interlocutors at the CCP Central Committee International Liaison Department (CCID) had told him that China would invest in projects in JI-friendly areas in the FATA (Bajaur and Mohmand).

¶4. (C//REL ACGU) A Canadian Embassy officer told us March 11 that a CCP CCID official had told him that JI desired an MOU with the CCP after hearing that Pakistan People's Party (PPP) had signed an MOU during Pakistan President Zardari's first official visit to China in 2008. However, in his view, desire to build ties existed on both sides. The MOU contained language recognizing Chinese territorial integrity. The Canadian diplomat assessed the MOU as China's attempt both to demonstrate the legitimacy of its sovereignty over Xinjiang Province and to hedge its bets on the Pakistani political scene.

¶5. (C//REL ACGU) Beijing University South Asia scholar Han Hua gave a slightly different interpretation to the agreement. She told PolOff on February 27 that the MOU, rather than serving to establish Chinese legitimacy in China's northwest region, simply reflected the CCP's desire to show respect for Muslim culture and religion without lending support to radicalized elements in Pakistan.

¶6. (C//REL ACGU) While not commenting on the objectives of

the MOU, Pakistan Embassy Counselor Shafqat Ali Khan (strictly protect) suggested to us on February 27 that though JI was not a part of the governing coalition, the CCP had reached out to it because JI was the most organized of the Islamic political parties, in contrast to more loosely-structured parties such as Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam.

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